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ANIME • MANGA
MUSIC • CULTURE

V FAN

DODEKALIN
EXCLUSIVE MANGA
STARTS INSIDE !!

ANIME CDS ANOT
MUSIC BY THE
ANIME CIRCLE
AND

MEET GOD!
HAYAO MIYAZAKI

WIN!
STREET FIGHTER II
RT 3000

PRESENT

MANGA BOOKS REVIEWED



KAMEHAMEHA!
THE WORLD OF
DRAGONBALL
MERCHANDISE

15 TOP ANIME



COLLECTORS 1st ISSUE

SUPER DEFORMED DOUBLE FEATURE

Little Gall Force & Scramble Wars



The Super Deformed Double Feature contains two parody Super-Deformed style features; "Ten Little Gall Force" and "Scramble Wars" as well as two short documentary clips; one about Kenichi Sonoda, anime legend, and one about the making of the Gall Force theme song. Available from 2/10/95, BBFC willing!

Our videos are available at all good video and comic shops. Also available direct from the Anime Projects Shop along with our extensive range of anime merchandise.

anime
PROJECTS

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ANIME • MANGA
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JFAN



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J-FAN NEWSDESK

PEACH: Hello and welcome to the J-FAN Newsdesk. My name is Mr Peach and I'm here to bring YOU all the latest gossip from around the globe. Today I'm on location on Namekku planet, and shortly I'll be joined by our two guest newscasters none other than those 2 Warriors themselves: Son Goku and Vegeta! Give them a big hand!
«CLAPPA CLAPPA CLAP»
PEACH: But now on with our first news item.

SD DOUBLE FEATURE

At the time of writing these wonderful people at the BBFC have still not passed the long awaited **ANIME PROJECTS** release: **SD DOUBLE FEATURE** (aka **SD SCRAMBLE** (WARR)) The main problem seems to be that the BBFC want to classify each story separately instead of as a single video!!!! **WHY??** The video is presented as a whole and should therefore be classified as a whole. Come on now guys, what are you on...?

MARS ATTACKS

Those lovely people at **PRONGER** are currently looking into releasing their master SD II thriller, **ARMITAGE**. In the UK Set in 2036 on Mars, it's all about a 19 year-old girl called Armitage: a Martian police officer who is teamed up with detective Ron Sybilus who was recently transferred from Chicago. Earth. Look out for it around January 22. Watch out for a special feature coming soon.

NEW ANIME MAG

Yes: a brand new anime and manga mag should have reached the shelves by the time you read this.

It's called **J-FAN**, and looks utterly superb. Featuring the tremendous manga **ODDAXIN** by Masayuki Fujikura. Look out for it.

PEACH: Well guys ya gals, wasn't that a clinic? Hey now it's time for our guest newscasters to introduce themselves. Go ahead chuams!
ODU: He... my name's Son Goku **VEGETA:** Go I have to do this?
PEACH: Heh heh. A little team spirit needed there eh? How tell me **Goku** what do you do for a living?
ODU: I beat people up Mr Peach.
PEACH: Sounds like fun! What about you **Vegeta**?
VEGETA: I arrange flowers. On **YOUR** grave.
PEACH: Uh... OK. Now to our next item read by **Goku** himself...

GAUIN PRESS

That spinning chappie, Josh I want to rule the World! Clark needs your help. Yes you! Currently working on a movie of his fan-manga hit **ARIEL**. **DEVIL SCHOOLGIRL** with the help of **Alternative Image** and **The Magic Camera Company** whose credits include special effects for the **JUDGE DREDD** movie and the forthcoming **CHERRYBLOSSOM**. Josh is in need of a few bits and pieces to speed production along. Things needed include a soundtrack some voice actors and a 4mb or 8mb RAM board for an Amiga 1200. If you think you can help with any of these contact Josh at the following address:

GAUIN PRESS, 2 BIRCHDALE DRIVE, BIRMINGHAM, CRIMSEY 5, HUMBERSIDE DN20 3LB or call him on 014681 573625

HARAO MIYAZAKI GROWS A BEARD Yes unbelievable but true. The God of modern anime now has whiskers of his own. Remember you heard it here first. (But he's had it for ages lol.)

ODU: War that OK?

PEACH: That was just man! What a natural! Your turn now **Vegeta**. Take it away!
VEGETA: Why?
PEACH: Go for it!
VEGETA: What's the point?
PEACH: Oh never mind. I'll read it.

ANIME SUPRE-CONSOLE

Surprisingly, with the recent launch and all the hype of the new Super-Console, the **SATURN** and **PLAYSTATION** very little has been heard of NEC's successor to the popular PC ENGINE, the **PC Fx**. As you can see from the ad, this machine is being squarely marketed as an anime console. In fact, one of the games currently available, called **BATTLE HEAT**, is a beat'em up with a difference. Instead of having either sprites or the more recent style of polygon characters, it basically looks just like a controllable OAM. But unless those old isometric games is g **DRAGON'S LAIR**, you have complete control over your character. Also, the designs and moves are straight out.



INTERSECTION 9.5

THE GLASGOW WORLD CON
 "A survivor's tale" by Josh 'ONI' Clark

It was a dark, rainy night in Glasgow, Scotland, and I was sitting in a small, dimly lit room, surrounded by a crowd of people. The air was thick with anticipation, and the sound of rain pattering against the windows was a constant backdrop. I was there for the Glasgow World Con, a convention that had been a long time in the making.

I had heard about the convention for years, but it wasn't until I was invited to participate that I decided to go. The idea of a convention in Glasgow, a city known for its rich history and culture, was intriguing. I was excited to see what the event would be like, and to meet the people who had made it possible. The convention was a mix of science fiction, fantasy, and gaming, and it was a chance for fans to come together and celebrate their shared interests.

As the convention progressed, I was struck by the sense of community and camaraderie that existed among the attendees. It was a place where people from all over the world came together to share their passion for the genre. The convention was a success, and it was a testament to the power of fandom.

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the world of drago

The manga may have finished, but the spirit lives on. And to celebrate the shameless merchandising of this most popular cultural icon, we give you a run down on some of the most exciting DRAGON BALL goodies.

❖ **SUPER SAIYAN SON GOKU:** Wow, this beats a talking RoboCop anyday with three saiyans! Kamehameha! power up and attack! AND a little flashing yellow light in the palm of his hand: this is a true DBZ otaku toy. My only gripe is that its head doesn't move, but a strong wrist and a pair of pliers'll soon fix that.

OTAKU RATINGS: 3/5. If it was a Ninja Turtle would YOU play with it?

❖ **SAIYAN GEAR MACHIN:** Kamehameha! Push it against Kamehameha! Push it against Kame etc...

❖ **PENCIL:** I'm sure you don't need a description of this do you? You do? Tough.

OTAKU RATINGS: 3/5. Or 5/5. If you don't sharpen it.

❖ **DRAGON BALL TINT:** What else can you put in your DBZ PENCIL TIN?

❖ **VIDEO GAME:** Out in malls, malls

formers on almost all formats, this is the Megadrive version. It's a one-on-one beat 'em up (Oh! surprise!) with one player having the choice of 8 characters from the DBZ series (around the time of Perfect Cells, initially. It's a bit weird to play but after you get used to the controls it's great fun, the inclusion of flying and the faithful "split-screen" technique gave it the edge over standard. But fighting games like Street Fighter II (Oh, computers!)!

OTAKU RATINGS: 5/5 (import and SCART only, in case)

❖ **DRAGON BALL TINT:** So you can beat the crap out of Kiliyn

❖ **TRUNKS NOTE PAD:** This smart little pad of paper sports the ever popular and utterly funky Trunks on



the front, looking pretty hard as usual.

OTAKU RATINGS: 5/5.

❖ **DRAGON BALL TINT:** To facilitate the use of your DBZ pencil in

❖ **PENCIL TIN:** Just the thing to impress everyone at school/college/work/the institution etc. It's also got the spookey metal tray inside it.

OTAKU RATINGS: 3/5.

❖ **DRAGON BALL TINT:** What else can you put your DBZ pencil in?

❖ **DRAGON:** Used to draw straight lines (DRAGON).

OTAKU RATINGS: 5/5.

❖ **DRAGON BALL TINT:** To facilitate the use of your DBZ pencil in

❖ **DRAGON BALL TINT:** To facilitate the use of your DBZ pencil in

BATTLE COLLECTIONS:

These smart packs of mini-figures are quite easily available and there are loads of them to collect,



although sets from the earlier part of the series are less common. Packs come in different sizes but the prices are quite steep so start saving those pennies.

n ball merchandise



If and No. 18, this is pretty good fun for an LCD game, if naturally limited. Take that! **WHAD BAH BEEP!**
OTAKU RATING: 9/10 (You'll never play DIL FANGC again!)
WHY YOU WANT IT: The smart tunes!!

● **LAMINATE CARDS:** Coming in either credit card or A4 size, these are pretty common items which look very effective when placed cunningly around your house (i.e. hallway, toilet, cupboard under the stairs etc...).
OTAKU RATING: 4/10
WHY YOU WANT 'EM: Because they're **DRAGON BALL**, why else?

● **SWEETS AND BICKIES:** Let's face it. The Japanese aren't the best people in the world at making sweets. However, this fact is wildly irrelevant when you come across the little toys you get in every pack. Battle Figures with background scenes, stickers and rubber

'Dragon Balls' are just a few of the gems inside these packs. Tell a lie, the sweets aren't all that bad. (Cronch, cronch!)
OTAKU RATING: 5/10 or 9/10 (If you have the will power not to eat them!)
WHY YOU WANT 'EM: For the tasty food!

● **'SUPER COLLECTION' ACTION FIGURES:** Although not nearly as much fun as your talking Son Gohan, these guys are well moulded and look very impressive when flying around the room. To achieve this, you will need to make a simple construction of string and pulleys, or an anti-gravity chamber will suffice. Failing that, a few bottles of Jim Beam will do the trick.
OTAKU RATING: 6/10
WHY YOU WANT 'EM: So they can scold your talking Gohan.

● **HERO-PP CARDS:** The only major difference between the two is that the Hero Collection come with a points game thingy on the back, while PP cards have trivia questions. Yume
OTAKU RATING: 7/10
WHY YOU WANT 'EM: For the weirdo/gaun peel-back gold cards.

them as a favour. Whahy!
OTAKU RATING: 7/10
WHY YOU WANT 'EM: They make very fashionable earrings.

● **WALLET:** Although not too practical for keeping you loose change in, this is the perfect thing to contain all your idol cards, or alternatively you can put your credit cards inside so you can whip it out and flash it over the counter at shops. (No comment, huh?)
OTAKU RATING: 7/10
WHY YOU WANT 'EM: Cos it's a lot better than your old StarCitys.
OTAKU RATING: 10/10 (You got, huh?)

● **LOL BANG:** (No comment)
OTAKU RATING: 10/10
WHY YOU WANT 'EM: (No comment)



DBZ TISSUES:

Yes, you can now blow your nose with the help of your favourite characters. They're soft. They're white. Um... that's it really. Pfthrrrrrrrr!



DRAGON BALL PARTY PACK.

Although it's unlikely that you'll find one new anymore (ha ha, I've got one and you haven't!), you never know what a trip to a local boot fair may bring. Filled with tons of goodies, and aimed squarely at kids, this is a must have for the serious DBZ craze. Included are key chain flicker-stickers, place mats, postcards, a height chart and a smart metallic plicy thing. Hours of fun!

well that you'll be inviting people in off the street just to have a look. (I know I have!)

ANIME CELLS

Very popular and therefore quite pricey, original anime cells from DRAGON BALL aren't that easy to come by in the UK, so a

'TAPESTRY' HANGING PICTURES: Forget paper, these cloth posters look so damn smart on your

little detective work may be in order. Most come with just the cell and production drawing, but if your bank account stretches far enough, a complete background setup is well worth the investment.





BIG

reasonably well, although some are a little blotchy. The best thing

is that the biggest ones can easily double for garden gnomes, making them the perfect gift for your Granny.

BIGGER

For those of you who don't like the gritty, hand-edged image of **DRAGON BALL**, these **SUPER DEFORMED (SD)** figures are just the ticket. Ultra-sweet, they come in various sizes: 1 1/2", 3" and an impressive 5". They're all here, from Great Saiyaman to Mr Satan (the guy with his mouth wide open), moulded in plastic and painted



BIGGEST



DRAGON BALL
SPECIAL EDITION

BLUE SKIES

Hayao Miyazaki and the Anime of Idealism.

by Jim McLennan

"Although the world is beset with lots of seemingly intractable problems, such as the population explosion and environmental disruption, making it difficult to entertain hope, it's nevertheless wonderful to be alive."

Hayao Miyazaki, Japan's foremost director of anime, is often referred to as their Walt Disney. Probably a more accurate comparison would be Steven Spielberg, as Miyazaki's works possess similar imagination and genuine cross-population appeal. Their box-office success is also comparable: everyone of Miyazaki's last three films have taken more money than any other film in Japan this year the week released: 100% more than any animated film; 140% more than any Japanese film. Just more than *AMÉ* (other film).

Miyazaki was born in Tokyo on January 5th, 1941. His father was a director of Miyazaki Airplane, a company owned by Hayao's uncle which made rubber-tyres. Japan's much feared 1945 bombing, a family atmosphere which may explain why so many of his films and stories have flight as a major theme: it was not until 1964 that he decided he wanted to become a comic artist (but he rapidly discovered he could only draw planes and battleships).

Unfazed, in 1965, he joined Japan's top studio, Toei Animation as an art-director. It was here that he met Kato Takahata, with whom Miyazaki has collaborated on many projects since, and Akemi Ota, his wife to be. After 8 years with Toei, he left in search of new challenges and, despite a failed attempt to secure the rights to "Pippi Longstocking", Miyazaki finally got the chance to direct some episodes for "Lupin III", a then-new TV series.

However, it was to be eight more years, and nearly thousands of odds before Lupin also gave Miyazaki his second big break: the chance to move into feature film production, with Castle of Cagliostro, the second "Lupin" movie. The film took only six months to make, from pre-production to completion: fast, even by anime standards, and it's lightning speed for Miyazaki, who habitually takes 12 to 18 months per movie. Given this, it's remarkable that the quality of the end product is still so high.

The hero is Lupin III, a descendant of Arsène Lupin, a character created by French author Maurice Leblanc at the turn of the century. Like his ancestor,

Lupin III is a gentleman thief of high intelligence, and begins movie too - except with regard to other people's wishes! He and sidekick Jigen rob a casino only to discover the money is all counterfeit. After heading to the principality where the Forgers are said to originate, they find themselves rescuing a lady in a wedding dress; the soon leads them into deep mystery and high adventure.

It's a superbly entertaining piece of fun! Comedy is perhaps the area where animation beats reality hands down, since there are no limits, and Castle reveals the freedom. All the characters here are memorable: Fujiko, the free-spirited female thief; Senjirou, the incorporeal detective who's life is dedicated to capturing Lupin but who ends up working with him; and above all, Lupin III, arguably the best male character in anime. If the maker of Hudson Hawk had any sense, it might have ended up looking something like this.

The following year, 1980, Miyazaki directed two more episodes of the TV series under the pseudonym of Telecom - the name of the company where he was "officially" working as an animation instructor. He then began working on a TV series loosely based on Sherlock Holmes (all the characters are dogs), a co-production with Italian TV. Five tapes of episodes from the series were released here on VHS video as "Sherlock Hound", and can be found occasionally in rental shops.

In 1982, the manga "Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind" began in *Animage*, and also rapidly began on converting it to an anime. The resulting film appeared in 1984, and is to date sadly the only Miyazaki feature officially available in this country. Set in a post-apocalyptic world where humanity is being squeezed out by a toxic jungle, the hero is Nausicaä, a young princess who must fight plans to revive the technology that destroyed civilisation. It's the most overtly green of all Miyazaki's movies, though a majority espouse a certain eco-friendly attitude. Released in a severely edited format as "Warriors of the

Wind", even with 25 minutes missing and its more adult concerns toned down for a younger audience, it's still a powerful piece of work.

The film's success spurred Miyazaki to set up Studio Ghibli, his own animation house. It's first project was *Castle in the Sky* (Laputa), undoubtedly Miyazaki's most ambitious work to date at 130 mins long, rarely seen length for animation. Said Miyazaki: "I had always wanted to make a movie about a flying city in the sky, perhaps because of the books I read while I was young. Laputa, the city was from 'Gulliver's Travels'.



Set around the turn of the century it's about the search for Laputa, the legendary city which floats in the sky and dates from an unknown era, with technology far in advance of anything then available. When a sample of this tale is shown, a descendant of the Laputan kings seeks to reclaim his heritage for his own ends. To do this, he kidnaps Sheeta, the rightful heir to Laputa, though she is unaware of it, which brings him into conflict with Pazu, the son of an aviator

Whimsy. It may be partly autobiographical as Miyazaki's own mother suffered from spinal tuberculosis for nine years, when Hayao was young, and she spent much of the time in hospital. Certainly it's straight from the heart. Few films can melt me, but *Totoro* reduces the writer to the consistency of apocryphal of old. Upon watching *Totoro* every time, which is quite something given that this unstarred voice in nostalgia is for a land on the other side of the globe, and a time before I was born. Perhaps Miyazaki tapped into some unconscious common imagery but the result is pure delight, non-stop parade of wonders including perhaps Miyazaki's best creation - the Cat Bus, a neotropical creature with a grin a mile wide, looking like something designed by a craned soft toy manufacturer. I have a slightly embarrassing confession to make about Miyazaki's next film, *Tokyo's Delivery Service*. I don't actually like it that much. Perhaps a telling quote is one from an interview Miyazaki gave the year *Kiki* was released, when he said, "I want to see whether or not I can make a movie without any action." I think *Kiki*

proved he could. This isn't necessarily a problem - after all, *Totoro* is not exactly action-packed - if there was something to compensate for it, and that's where *Kiki* fails to deliver: the characters are distinctly not funny, the plot is distinctly no-funny and only the animation itself is

anything above average.

Three-year-old goes to the city to seek her fortune. She meets some people. She has some mild adventures losing her cat, for example. She finds she can be happy despite her lack of spell-casting ability if this sounds like a pretty naff TVM, I'm picking it about right. Remove all conflict and struggle from a movie and it takes very careful plot and character design to hold the audience's interest. *Totoro* managed it because every sequence held a wonderful surprise. But in *Kiki*, everything pans out exactly in your expectation, and the result is flat as I'm concerned is Miyazaki's most forgettable movie to date. Your mileage may vary.

Porco Rosso represented a return by Miyazaki to the action/comedy genre in which he started instead of films, which, as he said with conque in-cheek, "would let me get more famous awards each time." Porco is first and foremost an adventure story set in Italy during the 1920s, and it about the heroes and villains, pirates and aces who flew in that era, a theme which gives Miyazaki plenty of opportunity to indulge in his well-known passion for airplanes and flight.

The twist, however, is that the hero is a pig. Literally. He was once human, but after a strange near-death experience during a dog-fight, he found himself with a pig's head. This is a nice idea, but nothing much is ever made of it, beyond



who wants to find Laputa to prove his father's claim of seeing the city.

There is much more to it than that. Miyazaki makes full use of two hours to cram in more story than you'd think possible, yet it is never overwrought. The film is the perfect example of Miyazaki's philosophy: "I do not make movies with the intention of presenting any messages to humanity. My main aim in a movie is to make the audience come away from it, happy." During production, Miyazaki napped up 14-hour days for six months, non-stop, not just drawing story boards but he doing his story's material where he felt they were deficient. The end result is truly a Hayao Miyazaki film, one of the best examples ever of what can be done with animation. And as the setting for Laputa seems vaguely familiar, it's probably because Miyazaki travelled to Wales in May 1983, to look at locations.

From this point on, Miyazaki's output slowed, reflecting labor dedication to quality. After the massive epic of *Laputa: My Neighbour Totoro*, released in 1988, is a totally different movie, on a much smaller and personal scale. Two small girls go with their father to stay in the country, as Mother is in hospital. They stay in an old house, and meet the family of Totoros who inhabit the nearby forest. Now, what is a Totoro? Good question. Or just imagine the cutest, naughtiest, warmest thing you can, and multiply it by ten.

It's hard to say what stops the film from descending into Disneyesque:



a very close sequelist where he tells of his transformation. Otherwise it's business as usual as he rescues a gang of prisoners from some schoolgirls, avoids the attentions of the fascist government, and fights for the honour of his friends. It's effective enough stuff, and after the "old Mr" that was Kik, it's a relief to see him rediscover the art of things happening. These things, however, don't seem to link into each other as well as in his best movies: the scenes between the sea-deers seem a little contrived, and the political subtext is inconspicuously 11.9 rather than a pig from a fascist. But even flawed Miyazaki is still highly enjoyable.

Each Miyazaki film seems more successful than the last, demonstrating mastery of every facet of film-making: plot, characters, action atmosphere - over and above the skills necessary to create good animation. His trump card is an ability to transcend the usual clichés of the field: the heavy SF content in anime is understandable, but too often the creators fail to appreciate anime's strengths and weaknesses, while his cheaper to drive spaceships, giant robots, etc. they can NEVER be as impressive as "the real thing" available through live-action. The "BlackRunner" cityscape may be 10 years old, but it's still far better than even those in Akira or Suburimum City. Despite Miyazaki's deep interest in flight, technology for its own sake plays an insignificant role in his films. What is important is how people relate to technology: the abuse of science and how power can corrupt, is another recurring theme.

Recently he seems to have concentrated more on other facets apart from direction: "I'm a Sumoator" out in July from Studio Ghibli, sees him acting as producer and scriptwriter, and it seems that he is becoming slightly less idealistic than in the past. His films have always been moral, without ever seeming preachy, and have a strong sense of right and wrong, honour and duty though rarely in their much blacker or whiter in his characters. Even the worst of villains is operating for plausible reasons, and it's easy to see ourselves in their shoes. But, as in Warner movies, good always wins. This eternal optimism is, perhaps more than anything else, what distinguishes a Miyazaki movie. And in these days of Tinseltown and sam-bang action, he provides a very welcome breath of fresh air.

I really don't know why my words are so highly regarded. But, then there's no guarantee that I will continue to enjoy acclaim. Many times I've waited for younger filmmakers of great promise to come along, and I've even tried following them - but to no avail. I myself intend to continue making films. I have no idea how long I can go on, or what the next generation holds.



THE PIG TALKS

A review of the dubbed Porco Rosso by Peter Cullen

A bit of a mystery, this one, arriving as it did on my desk by means of an unlabeled cassette bearing the intriguing legend 'Watch Me'. Surprised I was, then, when the first images appeared, to discover that it was one of my favourite films of all time, Hayao Miyazaki's fabulous aerial adventure Porco Rosso (also known by the slightly more cumbersome title The Crimson Pig). Being set in a fictionalised 1930's with a hero who is a man with the face of a pig would ordinarily relegate a film to one 'weird' bit, but here, as with all cinema's great directors, execution is the key. Just look at Spielberg's success with a doll looking rubber fish in Jaws, Cameron's The Terminator a film with a powerfist plot and a star with the acting ability of Virgil Tracy without the strings, or Scorsese, in which Tim Burton manages to inspire sympathy for characters who die in the first ten minutes. Miyazaki is one of those rare filmmakers with the talent required to take seemingly hopeless subject matter and turn it into a film that can excite, enthral and entertain.

Porco Rosso is a perfect example of this talent, although the brutal disfigurement of the hero, Marco Pappot, is of minimal importance as a plot element, only affecting his interaction with other characters in what they call him (my Porcellino, Porco Rosso etc.). This is the vital suspension of disbelief that the viewer must accept in order to appreciate the wonderful characterisation and intelligent dialogue herein. The reason for Marco's transformation is never really explained, only touched upon by a blunder but extremely moving scene about the

quilt of surviving lost friends, in the light of this, it is possible to see it as a metaphorical change rather than a genuine physical one, representing Marco's death of personality when his wife is trade pined with his friend in actual death is denied.

If all this sounds needlessly speculative and more than a little pretentious, I apologise, and don't let it put you off. What we have here is a beautiful and lovingly made film, with Miyazaki's customary exploding water, pom-pom thick clouds, and cute designs, brought to life with animation as good as animation gets.

Set in the morally ambiguous and little explored world of pre-Second World War Italian sky pirates, the realistic aircraft designs and understated but sinister presence of the newly installed fascist party make this Miyazaki's most subtle and mature film to date, a film suitable for all ages, unlike Disney's work which appeal only to kids and big kids.

As to the quality of the dub itself, it's surprising good, particularly Marco himself, who is played by a Clint Eastwood sound-alike, and Curtis, Marco's flying ace who sees himself as not only the world's greatest pilot but also its greatest 'odds' man. The only important complaints I have are that Porco leader Mena Uta is almost unintelligible and minor characters are somewhat lacking in emotion. To date, however, I still don't know the origins of this English language version as it's still not commercially available. It was created under the supervision of original creators Studio Ghibli. However, which explains why it is so much better than the usual.

PATLABOR II

DATA 2



DATA 1

LABEL
MANGA VIDEO
RUNNING TIME
108 MINS
CERTIFICATE
PG
PRICE
£13.99 (DUB)



STAFF

DIRECTOR
Mamoru Oshii
CHARA DESIGN
Masami Yuuki
Akemi Takada
MECHA DESIGN
Yutaka Izubuchi
Masaharu Kawamori
MUSIC
Kenji Kawai
CAST
ASUMA
David Jarulis
NDA
Briony Glassco
GOTD
Peter Marinkor



VERDICT: A TRUE CLASSIC OF ANIME

SCENARIO

The year is 1999. In South-East Asia, a UN labor team is destroyed by terrorists, triggering the first steps toward the downfall of Japanese military and governmental power. Three years later when martial law is announced and the police take over the streets, the members of the now disbanded SFD are called upon to defend the city. Little do they know that the mainstream behind the terrorists is none other than Requiem's former teacher and ex-lover, Tsugu. Madam's loyalty is split between her responsibility to the SFD and her feelings for her ex-lover.

What can I say about this video? After being bowled over by the first PATLABOR release, I couldn't wait for this one to arrive. There are two main differences between the films, the first being the more inclusive use of computer graphics and the second in the character design. Not having the benefit of seeing the "evolution" of the characters through the TV series (HINT ALERT), the changes still come as a bit of a shock, but there is no need to worry as they do work well. The animation is flawless and the mecha are perfect. The dub is very well done with NDA having a lots of vocal range and GDS is as busy as ever. One of the most disturbing things in this film is the music (see review this month), which gives a really spooky atmosphere to the whole thing. This really comes as a top recommendation and if you haven't seen the first film, I urge you to buy it immediately. Now the pain begins, as you've even lost of an excuse not to see them.

D.D.D.D.D.

If you've seen the first movie, then you'll know pretty much what to expect in terms of style and pace from this one. If you haven't seen it, yet, then as long as you don't expect tons of mecha action then you will not be disappointed. Yet again, Mamoru Oshii proves that he's one of anime's finest directors with some amazing atmosphere that is usually more akin to live action. As you'd expect from Oshii, there's plenty of risk (inside a little too much in places), but when the action comes along it's powerfully directed. Really, I'd go wonder that this was the best animated film of 1998. Despite a 14 rating, this is truly an adult movie, and one that shows how visible and strong the anime medium can be. I can only hope that Manga Entertainment continues to release videos of this quality in the future.

D.D.D.D.D.



VIDEO REVIEW

STREET FIGHTER II



DATA 1

LABEL
MANGA VIDEO
RUNNING TIME
88 MINS
CERTIFICATE
15
PRICE
£12.99 (DUB)



DATA 2

STAFF

DIRECTOR
Gisaburo Sugii
PRODUCER
Kenichi Imai
MUSIC
Cory Levios, John D'Andrea
CHARA DESIGN
Shuko Murase
CHIEF ANIMATION DIRECTOR
Yasuhiro Ohshima

CAST

RYU
Hank Smith
KEN
Ted Richards
CHUN LI
Mary Briscoe

VERDICT: SMASHING

SCENARIO

The story to **STREET FIGHTER II** is simple. Evil dude M. Bison has sent out robotic scouts in search of the world's finest street fighters. His aim is to brainwash them into working for him and form an army to take over the world, as you may well expect. His prime target is Ryu, but proving a hard man to find, Ryu's former friend Ken becomes an ideal target to draw him into the trap. Needless to say many fights ensue and everyone has a jolly good time giving each other a jolly good kicking. Enjoy.

Being a big fan of Jack Chan movies, I've noticed that he craves off-camera never really using the popularity of his action. This is the first movie that brings the action in SF to a truly brilliant standard and to a level that is both exciting and the only thing. Adding to this, the director's use of special effects is excellent, especially the production of a storm developing from the opening fight between Ryu and Sagat. The soundtrack, though re-recorded, fits perfectly, complementing the frantic pace of the film.

It doesn't matter if you've never played the game, because SF II is such a smart action movie that it will appeal to anyone who likes to watch a good fight. The director of the live action version must be praised.

★★★★★

With all the dialogue and action taken out, we finally get the chance to see how it should have been done. There's a great hard rock soundtrack that matches the power of the fights and is used to full potential. As for those fight details, they put the live film to shame, each character's favourite special move is fully being performed. The first fight has to be between Chun Li and Vega - boy can she kick! Although that always has to be said at times, this does suffer from the story, and as you start guess who there can look forward to a Chun Li shiver scene. One thing that was a shame was the lack of Cammy. She was obvious for a couple of minutes, and although it was a good couple of minutes I feel that she should have been used a bit more. Anyway, although this isn't going to be a ground-breaking video, it should be in everyone's collection.

★★★★★



MADOX-01



DATA 1

LABEL
MANGA VIDEO
RUNNING TIME
41 MINS
CERTIFICATE
PG
PRICE
£9.99 (DUB)

SCENARIO

The MADOX SLAVE TRIGGER is the fastest and most agile weapons system ever created by the U.S. MITTING. But imagine what would happen if a high school student who is born for a date inadvertently by name "Mitsuki" took trouble. So begins a rather hectic evening for Koji Nagamoto, who now has the mad and sexy named Lt. Kijima out to try and destroy the MADOX, after an embarrassing defeat by it in a brief run. By Kusanagi just wants it back in one piece. Where will it all end?

Beginning with a well-told story, even beyond the MADOX and some other details, this seemed quite promising. The MADOX itself is well-designed, with all its poses and gears etc. and the character designs are appealing, very angular and unique. But unfortunately there is very little story or character development. No real build-up, pumping action and only a few moments to make you smile. The acting is better, for with a couple of very good voices which turn a potentially good story into a wacky, over-the-top, it's not always terrible, but it certainly isn't great.



This is without doubt not a video for the uninitiated, but one for the serious mecha fan only. The story is unimportant and quite forgettable, and to be honest, this only would have worked better if there weren't any other scenes and just left the music. The only real reason to watch it is for the magnificent mecha designs, right from the side sequence, with some of the most detailed designs I've seen, and they never lose the appeal and you just don't care about the characters. If you're a big fan of mecha then you'll probably get a kick out of it, but if you're something resembling a story in your mind, stick to my LADDER instead.



VERDICT: NICE MECHA BUT LITTLE ELSE



DATA 2

STAFF

DIRECTOR
Shinji Aramaki
CHARA DESIGN
Hideaki Tamura
MECHA DESIGN
Shinji Aramaki
Kimitaro Yamane
MUSIC
Satoshi Yashihara
CAST
Koji
Michael McChes
Ellie
Nadia De Lencastre
LT KIJIMA
Peter Woodward

PROJECT A-KO 4



DATA 1

LABEL
MANGA VIDEO
RUNNING TIME
45 MINS
CERTIFICATE
12
PRICE
£9.99 (DUB)

SCENARIO

An ancient tomb, a sinister symbol, a lonely soulless girl, a massive alien fleet heading towards Earth, now the gods for the fourth installment of the A-KO series. A-KO and A-KO are flying it out again while B-KO's father is setting up an arranged marriage between school teacher Mrs. Ayumi and the cunning, but unfortunately, she is still playing for C-KO and A-KO and B-KO are still playing for her. So, if A-KO doesn't see her but then A-KO and Mrs. Ayumi actually does for her and it is confused already. But all is revealed, secret and sorted in the climax to the Division City Series.

To the real part of the Division City storyline is here. Comparing this with the previous episodes in the A-KO series, I found that it doesn't seem quite as funny, although there were a couple of classic moments in it. But despite this, it's still A-KO and therefore very enjoyable, with decent enough scripting and acting. One thing I would have liked is to have seen more of Speo and the Captain in this, as they only get a minuscule part. As that's left now is the whole story and I hope that it keeps up the high standards.



This has got to be the best of all the A-KO's released so far. After the old release of A-KO 3, this one shines. There's humour in abundance here with some rather weird charts in the background and even a guest appearance from a certain young lady in a leopard skin bikini. OK, there are a couple of slow moments but there are instantly forgotten as the action heats up. I really cannot recommend this video enough so, if you've never experienced the A-KO phenomenon, then go out now and buy the best of the series and don't be put off by number three. This more than makes up for it.



VERDICT: A PERFECT END TO THE SERIES



DATA 2

STAFF

DIRECTOR
Tajiri Moriyama
CHARA DESIGN
Tajiri Moriyama
MUSIC
Yasunori Honda
CAST
Venus Terese
Cathy Weseluck
Lynda Boyd

VIDEO REVIEW

ANGEL COP 6



DATA 1

LABEL
MANGA VIDEO
RUNNING TIME
26 MINS
CERTIFICATE
18
PRICE
£5.50 (DVD)

SCENARIO

The S.T.P. special security force has been wiped out, and only Angel is left to face the awesome power of Lucifer the psychic hunter. Meanwhile, Tai is finally getting close to the Shadow Government that started this wave of destruction. Will Angel be able to defeat Lucifer? Will Tai get too close to the truth? Will there be a sequel? Will Manga Video continue to squish the end titles, so that you need a microscope to see them? Find out.

Well, you really don't want to see this without Tai. ... Even though the opening and art has improved since the first season, episodes past a certain point are well-told. There are few things left on in the book but disaster for any anime. The first is the need to have lengthy explanations of the storyline every five minutes, and the second is the over use of swearing. Angel COP suffers from both of these - although not so much the latter. The first of the series is a real sell, but don't get me wrong, the action is intense, but the first - somewhat powerful - explanation leaves you feeling only you have never sympathised for any of the characters, and I hate to see the dub's not that good. Hope for a new series I think.



As for the quality of this series has moved pretty much the same, and the first episode is no different. The animation is still good, but a few subjective touches to it and the subject, all blood are still here for some degree. Core fans should watch out for the way that Lucifer gets what's coming to her. My main grip is with the prolonged and boring scenes where Tai is held captive and subjected to a lengthy explanation of the plot so far. And the final battle could have been a lot more dramatic. To be adding is only just acceptable. Having failed to improve since the first episode. Overall an average ending to an average series.



VERDICT: ONLY IF YOU'VE GOT THE REST



DATA 2

STAFF

DIRECTOR

Ichiro Itano

CHARA. DESIGN

Nobuteru Yuki

MUSIC

Hisashi Ogasawara

CAST

ANGEL

Sharon Holm

RAIDEN

John Hunter

TACHIBANA

Danny Flynn

BABEL II - PARTS I&II



DATA 1

LABEL
BAST 2 WEST
RUNNING TIME
25 MINS EACH
CERTIFICATE
15
PRICE
£5.99 EACH (DVD)

SCENARIO

After being plagued by dreams of a voice calling him Babel II, high school student Ko-ichi is contacted by a mysterious young woman who tells him that he's a psychic. Convinced by this woman, he decides to go to the headquarters of an organisation of psychics whose intentions at first seem purely reasonable, but Ko-ichi senses that things are not as they seem.

BABEL II guys have been found guilty as charged on two counts. Count one being - lots of having a bit of scope. Count two is having rights. Unfortunately with acting. Productions may have your running up. All last the accused man a bit of sympathy with no redeeming qualities that I can see. Animation is of standard fare, and the only features which save it from a hanging are the extra cuts for viewer. Attack give the B&B. As a first statement - yes, it's what you know that this is going to cut, so it is. On leaving the picture I will now send. BABEL II you are persuaded to be taken from this place and made to watch. CD's for the next 10 weeks. What God have mercy on your soul. Only for the hard-headed fans.



I must say that I was expecting a boy standard psychic yam from this, but I was surprised. Although the animation isn't hyper detailed or anything, the design is fairly appealing. The voice acting is quite good, but for the most part which is a pleasant change from the usual. Good who have every line but. Action is good and the whole thing was quick, nice and watchable although perhaps putting both on one tape would have been more reasonable. In part one ends just as the story gets interesting. Not bad. Price 100.



VERDICT: MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND (WE CAN'T)



DATA 2

STAFF

DIRECTOR

Toshihisa

Matsumoto

CHARA. DESIGN

Shingo Aoki

MUSIC

David Tolley

CAST

Steve Balen

Mike McConnochie

Mari Devon

Wendee Lee

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PROJECTS

MANGA
VIDEO

VIDEO
FILMS

PIONEER

WESTERN
CONNECTION

EAST 2 WEST

DUBBING
SUBTITLES
RELEASES
PACKAGING
IMAGE

			N/A		N/A

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MORE

SAME

LESS

HORROR
COMEDY
SPORT
ACTION
SD (R)
FANTASY
DRAMA
OTHER

WIN!!

STREET FIGHTER II ART BOOKS

To celebrate the release of **STREET FIGHTER II-THE ANIMATED MOVIE**, MANGA ENTERTAINMENT have been kind enough to supply us with 5 very special prizes to give away.

STREET FIGHTER II-ASIA INTERNATIONAL is a glorious full colour art book, featuring a wealth of beautifully drawn illustrations. Also included is a special fold-out two sided poster that will make your friends weep and go green with envy.

So what do you have to do to win one of these? It's simple. Just look at the picture of Dhalsim below and tell us what he's saying and who is he saying it to. Note that it doesn't have to be another SF II character.



The 5 most amusing and original entries will each win a copy of the book, which incidently is in Japanese, but with pictures this good who cares?

Send your entries to: **STREET FIGHTER II COMPETITION, J-FAN, TREVITHICK HOUSE, MOORSWATER, LISKEARD, CORNWALL, PL14 4LN.**

Closing date for entries is **DECEMBER 1st**. Winners will be announced in a future issue. The Editor's decision is final, so there

**KISHIN
CORPS
ACTIVE
DEFENCE
FORCE**

KISHIN HEIDAN

**BY
ROBERT
LYN
DAVIES**

Pioneer is busy, setting it out: it's own version of all the most famous anime genres. It's flagship title - *Tenchinmuyo* brings us a superior wacky 'magical' girlfriend story. Alternatively there's *Kishin Heidan* a classic big robot adventure story. Told in the retro-tech style which dispenses with the sleek fluid lines of modern high technology to reintroduce the heavy engineering of the 1930's and 40's. Allow me to take you on a brief guided tour of this 'Republic serial' world. Where square jawed heroes battle against the mighty Third Reich and an irrepressible alien foe. Where guts and optimism will win out against formidable odds every time. Ladies and Gentlemen meet *Kishin Heidan*.

The story starts in 1941. The Kanto army is subjugating Manchuria. Either is waging war against Europe and the Japanese Navy has just bombed Pearl Harbor.

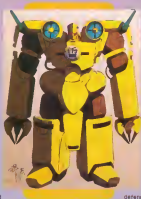
However not everything is exactly as history records. For instance Eva Braun is now a scientist attempting to decode the secrets of alien 'control' modules recovered from the bodies of inhuman troops who are descending from the skies as potential allies to the Third Reich. Across mainland China and continental Europe a mighty train transports an elite, independent and free thinking force known to only a few as the *Kishin Corps*. Their mission: to develop a defense able to protect our world from the invaders. Their dream: to stop the advanced technologies used in the alien 'robot' soldiers from being used in wars between nations.

Fortunately this fantastic twist on the global scene has not been allowed to skew the attention to period detail. Everywhere you look there are forbes style cars, dress, architecture and technology. There isn't a river or thermionic valve out of place. All the viewer is asked to do is believe in the presence of incomprehensible aliens and the mighty anthropomorphic machines of the *Kishin Corps*.

Eggs on Legs - The Aliens of Kishin Heidan

Sickly white and with the

apparent consistency of a fired



egg, the aliens are seen as an unpredictable evil force. Their actual agenda remains unknown at all times, as does their real form, since it's suggested that the alien storm-troopers seen are little more than expendable 'robot' drones.

Real consideration has gone into how these aliens operate. For instance at no time is communication between the

human forces and the aliens seen. It's alleged to happen, rather seems to have made a pact with them and provided a base of operations. But the lack of talk effectively emphasises that these are aliens not just a weird breed of men. This is further enhanced by their utter callousness. Never showing mercy they just facelessly machine gun all opposition out of the way.

Here are a few of the known facts about the aliens.

They are able to merge their bodies with people and machines. Anyone attached in this way is turned into an 'alien' any machines absorbed in this way gets used as a weapon by the aliens. After receiving a heavy shock sustaining wound the alien troops self destruct. This always happens when hit by bullets. But not after a sword slash. The only

defence against aliens when in close confinement is to use swords, not guns.

Aliens always appear from hole points. Bright luminescent holes in the sky which are always hidden behind clouds. These can be detected exactly 11 minutes before the first alien troops descend from them by equipment developed by the *Kishin Corps*.

The preferred weapon of the alien troops are powerful

machine guns - looking a lot like oversized Tommy guns.

The aliens home in on lots

The world's first atomic bomb. Which the United States is threatening to use against the invaders. The Kishin Corps are desperate to stop this weapon from ever being used, feeling that further development of the atom bomb would be a crime against humanity.

The Kishins

Kishin is the generic name given to the giant piloted robots which utilise the alien control modules.

Kishin Thunder
Mighty Kishin Thunder is the most physically potent of the three original Kishins. Standing about 47 feet high and possessing enough flamethrowers, machine guns and artillery to defeat a tank battalion. It's an awesome sight. It's squat torso and wide limbs all hark back to time when giant robots were real: barrel chested giant robots.

Kishin Dragon
Ocean support comes from the transformable and submersible Kishin Dragon. Internally looking and feeling

very much like a World War II submarine, it's full of narrow crawlways, metal ladders and a sonar which keeps going ping. Externally it's high shoulder squashed head design is unmistakable.

Kishin Wind

The Kishin Corps' aerial support unit. The smallest, lightest and fastest of the trio. However don't be misled by it's small size. Kishin Wind is heavily armed and certainly does not lack in the raw horsepower stakes.

Kishin Four

And finally in a supporting role we see Kishin Four. The largest of the Kishin Corps' mechanised warriors. It's 80 feet tall. Kishin Four matches a high land speed with plenty of power (supplied by six 1000-horsepower engines).

Panzer Knight

The Nazis' answer to the Kishin Corps' Panzer Knight is big, strong and very very heavily armored. Looking like a Teutonic warrior it just plain

dominates any landscape it walks across. However all this power is only achieved at a terrible cost.

There is an interesting rational as to why huge anthropomorphic battle machines have been developed. It goes a little like this: The alien modules used to control the Kishin machines and Panzer Knights require a LOT of power to run. Anything utilising them has to be big, because 1940's technology is not capable of miniaturisation. Believe me these machines have a lot of motors in them. Which still doesn't explain why they're basically man shaped. Well the alien troopers have two arms and two legs, and the control modules prefer to run using that form. Following a basic humanoid design also helps the pilots, because the control modules read the pilot's mind and interpret their thoughts and intentions into real actions! The Kishins have to look like big

control modules. Especially the 'Takamura' module around which Much of the plot revolves.

Hey these alien wind up toys - The Mecha of Kishin Heidan

Whenever there is any action, mighty machines take centre stage. Much of the plot revolves around their use and development. After all Kishin Heidan is a mecha show, and where would a mecha show be without mecha?

Kishin Express

A huge stream train.

Approximately twice the height of the average express. Used to transport Kishin Thunder around Europe and Asia, and act as a mobile base for the active defense corps.

The Fugaku

Flagship of the Kishin Airborne Division. The Fugaku is an oversized sea plane from which Kishin Wind may be launched into action. It's also used to transport VIPs like Albert Einstein, around the world.

Little White Dragon

Barelino's beloved white sports-car. Named because it's white, and there's a dragon sculpted along the bonnet. Simple really. But oh - what a car!

Glamour Girl



people. The technology just isn't there for it to be any other way. While the mighty mecha, icky aliens and World War 2

background provide very firm foundations, the plot and dramatic impetus is provided by the characters. However instead of just listing the dramatic personnel out, let's instead look at a few of the pivotal characters and their relationships and feelings. Because like all the classic big robot shows, it's really the people that count. They're the glue which hold everything together.

And there's certainly no better place to start than with Tetsu Takamura. Son of the scientist who first understood how to use the control modules and orphaned in episode 1 by a Japanese Army and coincidental alien attack. Much of *Kishin Helden* is a coming of age story for Tetsu. Charting his development from a confused scared child to one of the *Kishin Corps* leading operators. Throughout this time he is watched over and adopted by the heroic pilots of the *Kishin Corps* - Ilaneko, Daikaku Sakaki and Kishiko Masumi. Also essential to his development are Eva and Maria Braun. Twin sisters with very different views on life. Maria is the ever compassionate doctor who healed the injuries Tetsu sustained on his first encounter with the aliens. Eva is a scientist determined to unlock the secrets of the alien control modules. Only she doesn't care what use they eventually get put to and by whom. The relationship between the Eva, Maria and Tetsu is of key importance. They're both surrogate mothers to him. Both helping him along in their own way. As Tetsu in turn helps them by softening Eva's hard nosed attitude and by bringing the disparate sisters together. Right in the middle of Tetsu, the Braun sisters and heroes of the *Kishin Corps* is Doctor (Bill) Suguro. One of the *Kishin* original developers and a peace fanatic. His frequent rantings and panic attacks help stir Tetsu into some of his better moments whilst reminding us what *Kishin Helden* is all about - the evils and horrors of war, and the after effects of developing new weapons of terror. In many ways this is a Frankenstein story. The characters both good and bad are all being driven to



unlocking world shattering technologies by the circumstances of war. Symbolising all sides of the argument around our own development of weapons of mass destruction. But don't worry there's no preaching. The director is too skilled to allow that.

Opposing our heroes are the so called bad guys. Heading up these is Colonel Shinkai, a very clear headed and tactically thinking military man. He sees the potential of the *Kishin* s with quite a vision. His dream is nothing less than world domination. Seeing the development work being performed by both the *Kishin Corps* and the Third Reich's industrial power-base as pawns that he can use to his own ends. Alongside him is Lieutenant Fujishima, who doesn't quite agree with Shinkai's plans. But does intend to use the technology developed by the *Kishin* s to guarantee Japan's future prosperity. Helping along is their sergeant, Enormously strong, but not perhaps the brightest of men he fights loyally because he's a soldier not because he is evil or has plans of his own.

Throughout the series we are reminded that the *Kishin Corps* and the members of Shinkai's team all know each other quite well. A firm reminder if ever

there was one that the *Kishin* s are not mass engineered machines, but the products of a few brave dedicated men and women. Which it has to be said is a classic ingredient of this kind of boys own story. And perhaps is why *Kishin Helden* succeeds. It feels in many ways like those old cinema serials. But one that was produced with 90's attention to detail enough meaning to give older viewers something to be surprised at whilst retaining the roller coaster ride of a viewing expected from any modern action film.

Credits - The Creation of *Kishin Helden*

Kishin Helden is based on the original best selling novel by Masaki Yamada. And was brought to life by

Tarō Maki
Executive Producer
Masayuki Goto
Character Designer
Takeshi Yamazaki
Mechanical Designs and
Assistant Director
Koji Wakabayashi
Mechanical Designs and
Assistant Director

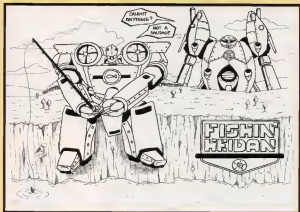
Hiroki Miyazaki
Music is by Kiyuo Wada who's stirring blood pumping sound-track is perfectly performed by the Shinkei Tokyo Orchestra and the Tokyo Kosei Gakushon chorus.

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By TONY FARRAR
MANGA BOOKS
£7.50
144 PAGES

Written by Toshiaki
Sakai of Nihonkoku Gaku
Kai and drawn by Tetsu



meanwhile, you'd think that this dynapunt classic would be firing on all cylinders and hurtling down the motor-way at a G-force to make Bristol wobble, but it doesn't. Don't get me wrong, it is good. The main problems being, while in the first four chapters the artwork is very thickly laid and too much black ink is used, which I found very unappealing. It took until chapter five, where the line work becomes fine and the beauty of the locomotives really get a chance to shine as you get to appreciate this wonderful art.

As for the story, the first couple of chapters were so obviously influenced by *SLASH BURNER* as to be painful and it wasn't until chapter four where the Psycho-delic robot comes into full mode that the action really heats up. The writing flows better here and also has more of those festive "sister" that we've all come to know and love in manga.

All in all a good graphic novel but don't expect to get known part of your chair while reading it.



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CONTRIBUTOR INFORMATION

CONCLUSIONS

Portrait of a Killer

From: Klaus.Hoyer@uni-erlangen.de

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For those of you unfamiliar with the anime currently out on the Manga Video label, *Crying Freeman* is the story of 'n' Yamamura - an assassin for the Yakuza Mafia, inadvertently recruited into the 9th Dragons organization and conditioned to be a member of its work.

After an introduction is witnessed by a Japanese woman, this time, he looks as well as the class that she must be the most wicked in his list. But when the time comes to kill her, he finds himself faced with a difficult choice - losing the safety of his organization by letting her live, or murdering a woman that he loves for

Those of you who have seen the entire series know of this very format: it was, after all, extremely faithful to the manga in place, but with the anime series seemed more of an action story held together with mutant quality for the hall of H. The manga does seem more acceptable, it's not that it's all that different, just that the story works better on paper than it does on the screen. That said, there is still a fair amount of unnecessary silliness around, but it seems less annoying.

Despite a few wrinkles, the story remains on realistic ground and has plenty of action with buckets of blood for sport sake, and Bergami's art is always good, if a little understated in places.

Overall, if you thought that the online lot least to begin with was OK, then you'll be more than happy with the merge, but if you decided it secondarily, then it's probably in your best interest to consider the



ZINE Zone

We cast our beady eye over what's going on in fanzine land.

You know, there is nothing better I like than to come into work in the morning and find a big ass on my desk. (Wang on better replace that five get piece) and, let's start again you should see the size of my wed this month.



IT HAD'S ENOUGH, JUST GET ON WITH IT, GO

Oh, first up this month are the offerings from **GALUN PRESS** courtesy of **JOHN ONI CLARK**, **LAURA WATTON'S BIG MECAM**.

34 pages £5p

Set in Tokyo 2025, BIG MECAM tells the story of 17

year-old Toshio Takaya who after a freak accident involving a monorail and a copy of 'HITOMI TAKAYA' is left with a pair of rather powerful mechanical arms. The story follows Toshio as he tries to come to terms with the frustration caused by his new arms. The artwork is up to Laura's usual high standard with some very professional looking by Chaei. One question though, how do they stand up with all that hair??

ARIEL - HIGH SCHOOL DEVIL GIRL
28 pages £5p

Josh Clark's second instalment of the adventures of the devil's very own daughter. In this issue we find Ariel excited to spend her lunch with only her father's second 'ORDEPHROFUTURAGE' for company and having to face the super powered MAGICK in a rather brutal game of baseball. The great cover PAGE D THE DEVIL DUO!! and Josh's throwaway page will have you eager for more.

WAYNE CRATTON'S HITOMI TAKAYA
20 pages £1.10

INTERVIEW WITH AN ASSASSIN In a

very convenient introduction to Wayne's main character HITOMI TAKAYA, a hired assassin who actually doesn't look out of place on a catwalk. While giving the impression of a good natured and intelligent woman, I'm sure there's a mean streak a mile wide and plenty of secrets inside her just waiting to pounce in future issues. With only 4 pages to introduce us to the character the story is well written with some great panels and nice touches (I back out the bike sticker). Given a couple of years to see how the drawing and ideas can build to go PICAPO at times! Wayne, along with Laura Watton will be a force to be reckoned with in the field of British manga.

AMERICA

80 pages £1.35

The flagship of GALUN PRESS and quite rightly so, issue 3 comes packed with 80 pages of class material ranging from articles on OH MY GODDESS and 'TUTU HUNTER' to debates on pulp anime and the portrayal of war in manga. Short stories in this issue are:





RECIPE FOR LOVE by Liana 'LAT-CLARK' Lection based on OH MY GOSH! and part 2 of 'RECLAMATIONS'. A megalomaniac 25 story by Josh 'OH-Clark'. Also on show is an article on 'DOLPHIN' or fan manga so if you're a budding artist but are wary about starting, this should give you all the encouragement that you need.

I must say that from all the fanzines that we have received (and that's not many, Come on folks, send 'em in) this has to be the most professional of them all.

RED LEOPARD 48 pages £1.30.

Probably the most vibrant and definitely the funniest of the fanzines I've read. Issue one gave us features on Fan manga, Jackie Chan and CHIBIBITTY? (ask if you think that's strange, wait til you see Issue 2). ISSUE 2. This time we'll have reviews of seven of the major fanzines in the UK, more Jackie plus SAUSAGES! Included in both issues are short stories by Paul Lambshire plus poems on the history of porn and all A to Z of cult movies. The undoubtable high points of these fanzines are the bits which consist of things like 10 STUPID THINGS YOU SEE ON THE MIDDLEWAY. It means you're ADORABLE to GO WITH YOUR CAR and 10 THINGS THAT THINGS ASKED 1 GAMES FOR.

MANGAFFECT/ANIMEA 48 pages £1.00

Issue 3 is the last ever MANGAFFECT to be produced by SAMURAI PRESS. But don't despair, they're just changing the name. This title has seen rather a few changes over the better I might add in its lifetime and it keeps improving. Starting out as a black and white A5 production, issue 3 is a full colour cover but the contents was lacking, being mainly review based (not true behind me Satam). This new issue is now in a very acceptable A5



B5 format. Let's have a look inside. Looking the page we have a short 6 page manga called 'HIMTO KISS' followed rapidly by a feature on Kenichi Sogawa's ladies. GALLIE PRESS are treated to a full product review. (This guy gets everywhere-OO) with Josh 'OH-Clark's' SPIN! GUARDIAN manga bringing us the year 2045.

pages MANGAFFECT are something for everyone and it's a very competent publication. Don't wait to see the new one.

CEKKA SHONEN ASHURA GAIDEN 42 pages

As this fanzine is from Belgium and it's written in French I have to be honest with you, I am crap at French! My linguistic knowledge is not so much schoolboy French, more primary

schoolboy French. But hey who cares this is a good fanzine. Produced by Charles Pocat from the Ashura Gaiden Club this fanzine is presented on good quality paper with a nice card cover and the printing is excellent.

Inside we have an introduction to Japanese words in French-as my school read! a feature on sex in Japan and Japanese RPG's. Ending this issue nicely is an article on R&A and a nice little cultural lesson on tea. I am really impressed with this fanzine and it has really made me want to brush up on my French, just so I can understand it.

The Fanzines reviewed here are available from the following:-

BIO MECHA, ANIMEA, HITOMI TAKAY and **ANIMEA**
CAIJIN PRESS, 2 BIRKDALE DRIVE, WIMBORHAM, GRIMSBY, SOUTH HUMBERSIDE, DN40 2LE.
TEL: (0469) 574025

RED LEOPARD
329 FINECHAMPSTEAD ROAD, WOKINGHAM, BERKSHIRE, RG4 3JT.

MANGAFFECT/ANIMEA
SAMURAI PRESS, BRYANT LODGE, COLLEGE ROAD, EAST WALTON, GRIMSBY, DN40 3PJ

CEKKA SHONEN ASHURA GAIDEN
CLUB ASHURA GAIDEN, C/O CHARLES POCAT, 132 AVE LEBURTON, 4300 WAREMME, BELGIUM.

We will gladly review any fanzine sent to us, so what are you waiting for?



MIURA A NATSU M

A brief overview of this years summer

Arranged by Miura Ajin Kai (an Anglo-Japanese festival), sponsored by literally dozens of Japanese companies in Battersea

Starting at 2.15 pm, the festival was opened with the cracking open of a sake barrel, entertainments on stage including some work by members of the Gyosei college from Reading, costume dance, classic koto and of course, an enthusiast

Food stalls were in abundance, selling everything from noodles to traditional Bento (Japanese lunch) and Ikebana (flower arranging)

For those with a bit of spare cash (and below the stalls selling manga, kimonos, cd's of ultra ornaments and

Overall this was a great day and I would thoroughly recommend this festival. See you



JIN KAI'S MATSURI

... festival in London's Battersea Park...

Japanese culture group based in London) and Spaniards, the 11th Matsuri was held on July 29th Park, London.

by H.E. Japanese Ambassador Mr Hiroaki Fujii. The festival itself presented a variety of wonderful examples of traditional Taiko drumming and singing. Other performances included a traditional Japanese karaoke competition, with some very amusing entrants.

Everything from noodles to noodles and more boxes! A martial arts display, calligraphy, Go were amongst the other stalls.

By the time I came away with no money! there were a few kawaii J-POP idol singers and masses of lacquerware.

I thoroughly recommend attending next year's Matsuri there.



All photographs © Mark West.

MACROSS PLUS

DEMON RECORDS

CAT: DSCD 12

£12.99

11 TRACKS

52:25 mins

This is an impressive CD and I extend my thanks to DEMON RECORDS for releasing it in the UK. Having been bowled over by the amazing MACROSS PLUS series (RELEASED BY MANGA VIDEO) I decided to splash out on the soundtrack and I am glad I did.

Written and arranged by YOKO KAWNO and performed by members of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra, the CD has a very rich and grand feeling from the opening 'NATIONAL ANTHEM OF MACROSS' filled with brass and strings to the soft vigils of 'VERY LITTLE WISHES'. The track 'FLY UP IN THE AIR' gives the listener a very real feeling of flight, very much in the vein of HOLST'S 'PLANET SUITE'. In fact this whole CD does have some of the feel of that great work with it's dark, moody tracks such as 'MORE THAN 3000', the delicate piano of the 'MYUNG THEME' and the bold brassiness of 'BREAK OUT'.

There are only three songs on this album and what songs they are. The first is an electrically charged concert track with a distinctly Asian feel to it. The second is my personal favourite called 'VOICES'. This is such a simple song, sung beautifully by AKINO ARAI and back with the simplest percussion IT'S WELL 'WORTH BUYING THE CD JUST FOR THIS TRACK'. The final vocal track would not look out of place next to the BEATLES 'NUMBER 9' from the WHITE ALBUM. Very strange and haunting vocals.

Well to sum up, this CD is essential listening: the music and songs are incredible and the booklet is jam-packed with gills from the series and the lyrics for the three vocals. A worthy addition to any collection. Keep up the good work, DEMON.



ANIMAGE COMPLETE COLLECTION

ANIMAGE

RECORDS/TOKUMA JAPAN

COMMUNICATIONS

CAT: TKCA 30706

20 TRACKS 61:30 mins

If there is one composer on this planet who deserves not only international recognition but also every award the music industry has to offer it is JOE HISASHI. The man is a God and deserves to be worshipped. The ANIMAGE PERFECT COLLECTION bring together a selection of his greatest pieces of composition & choral works from the films by KAZUO MIURA, another man who deserves immortality. The pieces on this CD are taken from the following films: LAPUTA, MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO (TORIARI NO TORORO), NAUSICAA, KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE & PORCO ROSSO. Each of the films has a uniquely different feel in terms of the music but all retain the distinct HISASHI character. Starting with PORCO ROSSO, we are

taken on a rollercoaster ride through the clouds with the aid of a marvellous cooperation of brass, strings and percussion. Following the very French sound of KIKI we are treated to some of my favourite music in any anime, the completely infectious SANPO. From the opening credits of TOTORO, I DEPI ANYONE NOT TO END UP TAPPING THEIR FOOT TO THIS OR EVEN SINGING ALONG BY THE END OF THE TRACK.)

Instantly recognisable, we are bathed in the glorious, rolling strings of LAPUTA (WHICH I FALL ASLEEP TO ALMOST EVERY NIGHT). Changing styles quite dramatically now we are offered the powerful brass tones of NAUSICAA, with their obvious Indian influence adding a very exotic feel to the piece. It's no good, I can't help myself, yes, it's another TOTORO track... this time from the end of the film we have another even more singable chorus with a beat that could even put a smile on JOHN MAJOR. 14 MINUTE PAUSE WHILE I LISTEN TO THE TRACK WHILE PLAYING WITH MY CUDDY TOTORO (CD BR).

AAARRGH... It's the 'OSTRUMMIES' song (HISASHI), I'll just have to sing along again... I CAN'T HELP



IT... OH NO... IT'S THE CATBUS SONG... I DON'T CARE IF I HAVE TO WRITE THE REVIEW ITS ONLY THREE MINUTES LONG AND I'M THE EDITOR ANYWAY, SO THERE! One of the most stirring pieces I feel on this CD is the final track, a beautiful piano rendition of the

NAUSICAÄ theme. Well, what can I say. Buy this CD now, sort of sums it up. If you've never seen or heard a **MIKAZUKI-HISASHI** work (**SHAME ON YOU!**), then this is a perfect introduction and should easily help you to relieve the money from your bank as you order the other 20 or so CDs available.

YS IV - THE DAWN OF YS
PERFECT COLLECTION VOL 2
KING RECORD Co
CAT: KICA 1140
22 TRACKS 60:34 mins

I have to say that I've long regarded the first two YS games as some of the best RPG's every produced, and the music has always been some of the best and most enduring of any game soundtrack. So it was with great excitement, having never yet played YS IV (anyone out there got it on the PC ENGINE?), to be able to discover what the latest volume had in store. I wasn't disappointed. For those of you who have never come across or avoided arranged versions of game music, it really comes down to whether you like synth sound or not. And I'm not talking about some cheesy elevator music; this stuff is the equivalent of Jean-Michel Jarre, though more punchy and to the point.

On to the CD itself: the first impressions are high, with a smart, racy opening track. Followed by a slower track, the CD follows the general pattern of mixing fast and slow, keeping you from getting bored. Being game based, none of the tracks are very long, but this is really a bonus as you get more tunes for your money. A special mention should go to track 11, which is utterly superb. So there. For those of you who have heard any of the previous YS music, this does have a different feel to it. The tunes are not as destined to become classics as the others were, even though they are very well composed. But there is a real treat for any old hands. On the end of the CD are a selection of new arrange versions of music from YS I. Nice versions of **RISE IN PEACE** and **FEENA** (the title track) are followed by one of my favourites, **THE SHADOW OF DEATH**, which is great, but just too short. The sound crew have gone all-out on a wild version of **THE LAST MOMENT OF THE DARK** (Dawn Tower) and an excellent YS IV **SUPER MEGA MIX** closes the CD with a satisfying finale. If you like YS synth or game music, then this is a worthy addition to your collection. As a footnote, other FALCOM CDs available include YS IV **J D K SPECIAL**, **YS II AND COLLECTION** and **THE LEGEND OF KANADU J D K SPECIAL**.

way for the more recent title track, **WE GOTTA POWER**. At first I didn't like this as much as the excellent **CHA-IA**, but after I listened to it a few times, it really began to grow on me, much in the same way that **CHA-IA** did. Thumbs up.

Track 2 is a strange one, sung by someone putting on a silly voice. It's really too weird to comment on in a sensible publication like this (mean, right, Ed.). Bouncy track 3 is fun to listen to, and the slow track 4 is alright. Track 5, however, is a real gem. It's a slow-ish song that has that perfect rhythm to it that makes it foot-tappingly good, and with adorable lyrics like **"SABU, SABU, SABU"**. It's utterly singable.

Track 6, sung by the guy who did **CHA-IA** is pretty good, but the real star of this CD is track 7. All together **GO GO LET'S GO TO RAIN-BOU SU!** This song is totally brilliant and I can't stop it (**SHU-SHU-RA!**) going around in my head. Be warned though, squeaky voices are in abundance.

Track 8 is quite "mellow" (horrible word), but very listenable and wouldn't sound out of place on a **CITY HUNTER CD** (**SHU-SHU-RA!**). Generally, if you've got any other **DRAGON BALL Z** CDs, you won't be disappointed, and if you haven't then you could do worse than give this a try (**SHU-SHU-RA!**) (That's enough, Ed.).

DRAGON BALL Z -
HIT COLLECTION 16
SM RECORDS
CAT: SM 257
10 TRACKS
41:19 mins

Firstly, I must admit to being a huge **DRAGON BALL** fan, so take into account that my natural bias will creep into this review. All the tracks of this are songs, so to begin at the beginning, we find that the omnipresent **CHA-IA** **HEAD-CHA-IA** has taken a vacation to make



HAVE WE NOT MET BEFORE? OR IT'S DEJA VU

PETER CULLEN takes a look at recurring themes in anime

During the meteoric rise in popularity recently enjoyed by anime (and to a lesser extent eastern live action) in this country, much has been made of obvious recurring themes, and there are a few questions that every long-time anime fan has become quite fed-up of answering in the last four years or so: 'What dedicated j-head hasn't heard, at one time or another, 'Why are their eyes so big?', 'Why are there so many robots?', 'Why all the tentacles?' or the slightly more uncomfortable 'Why do the girls look so young?' The beginner's thirst for knowledge can be quenched by a reading of Helen McCarthy's excellent book *Anime! A Beginner's Guide to Japanese Animation*, available from good bookshops, which is far and away the best introduction to the medium for the newcomer available in English. If you haven't already, read it before proceeding.

In this article, I'll be considering a few conventions - features that just seem to keep appearing, over and over again. Some may not be obvious to the neophyte, but as you watch more anime I can promise you'll start to get a feeling of *deja vu*, so watch out for a few of these. For reference, I've included some examples of where you might see them.

1. Deus Ex Machina GOP. Here comes the cavalry!

From the Greek *theos* (god) from the machine, this phrase is used to describe a mighty deity-like power gained from technology. The interpretation I am concentrating on is the one most annoying both in anime and live action: is the sudden resolution of a dangerous situation by what can only be described as divine intervention.

In ancient Greek plays, the hero would sometimes be saved at the last possible moment by a chariot representing the hand of the Gods, that would be lowered onto the stage would carry him away from the jaws of danger. In modern times (meaning contemporary storytelling as, of course, the most popular place for supertechnology is in future times/science fiction), the God of technology is *too* often used to wrap up plots as a substitute for character development. Sometimes it can be pretty funny of done with a little tongue-in-cheek irony, but usually it's a slightly irritating technique used by lazy

screenwriters.

Sensationalist

Some particularly extreme examples from recent US releases have been *Plastic Little* - a shallow but well designed adventure which ends and I told you not, with the heroine spiking out dead vapourising the entire planetary

ruiny with one shot from a laser cannon the size of Shogun's, the timely appearance of Mechagodzilla (Gigora at the end of the recent remake of *Godzilla* vs King Ghidorah, and the planet sized black hole bomb from



Guntuber

The best place to spot the Deus Ex Machina however is Saturday morning kids TV. That's right kids: *Power Rangers*. In every single episode without fail, they fight a monster for a while, get trounced, summoned up the big robot and save the day. In the very rare event that this doesn't work they just summon a bigger one and then a bigger one. Check out the section below on *Sentai* for some explanation of why this formula is adhered to with such enthusiasm and in case you were wondering, we'll be

meeting those *Power Rangers* again.

See: The original *Godzilla* (1954) in which science in its divine wisdom, defeats a big lizard by using a machine to take all the oxygen out of the cobble. Take a moment to think about that!

2. Bunny Ears GOR. See, what's up Deet?

Cute with bunny ears, why are they so cute? There is an obvious reference here to Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* bunny girls who've been icons of the eye-bandy market for decades now and whose success at marketing images is legendary. The American cultural invasion of Japan after the Second World War brought with it much in the way of popular media imagery, notably Disney's cute, large-eyed cartoon characters (who arguably set something of a standard for all mainstream animation from 1957



BEFORE MONSIEUR?★ ALL OVER AGAIN

emes in Anime (and Japanese live action)



onwards) baseball (the iconography rather than simply the sport) and western style soft porn which let's not beat about the bush here, is what Playboy is.

It wouldn't be at all fair to say that bunny ears appear only in a pornographic context, however as it's really just another way to introduce elements of cuteness into anime to lve action or for that matter real (ridiculous) concept though it is life they seem and frankly are incredibly cappy but in anime, where the surreal is more readily accepted they seem somehow acceptable.

Bunny ears can be seen, of course, as a subconcept of anthropomorphism which we'll talk about in a moment.

See Ursel Yatsura GAY into the Dream Master (the world of dreams is apparently run by giant rabbits necessitating the donning of magic bunny costumes by our heroes) Silhouette (powerful with bunny ears) and for an example of inspired rather than explicitly bunny nest, episode two onwards of Devil Hunter Yoko Yoko's supernatural machide stick has a hair bow that is linguistically bunny ear-shaped!

3. Sound Effects (or Monomani)

Written Japanese has very different origins to our European Latin based languages. In English, letters are essentially a code to represent spoken sounds, meaning given by pronunciation. In Japanese, on the other hand, a set of symbols is very large set with five thousand characters in everyday use, derived from the Chinese known as Kanji represent meaning, each phonogram a word in itself. Before you go thinking you've been suddenly and inexplicably transported to a different publication, the reason for this little language lesson is just to introduce the fact that Japanese people have a different view of the connection between sound and images to we Brits.

This leads to the appearance of seemingly superfluous sound effects (or in manga, floating words) in all sorts of situations. Most commonly blinking eyes go 'blink' smiles go 'doo' frowning fingers go 'guchiguchi' and most bizarrely of all absolute silence is represented by 'shin'. In the hilarious 'super deformed' comedy GAY Scramble Wars, amount of silence is demonstrated by the entire



cast yelling 'Shin!' at the top of their tiny lungs. Sometimes animators even go so far as to put floating writing into anime. Instead of sound effects often semi-subliminally the images only lasting a frame or two.

See Any manga, or just about any comedy anime!

4. Sentai for Go go away Power

Rangerella

Twenty years ago The fool production company hit upon a winning formula. The Rocky Marziano Joe Davis Wayne Gretzky of formulas in fact. The basic idea was simple: take a group of superheroes, colour code them and have them fight a never ending stream of strange monsters. Repeat until the end of time incredible as it may seem, this concept has spanned eighteen almost identical but unrelated (probably) series and more than eight hundred episodes in total.

The teams (or sentai as a rule consist of between five and seven members, mainly male but always with one or two women), each distinguished by a costume of bright, primary colour (usually selected from Red, Blue, Black, White, Yellow, Green and Pink, yes, Pink) and a personal weapon. Each hero also has their own mecha which they can (usually) control/pilot and if necessary (and somehow it always is) join with all the other mechs to form one giant robot which kicks, to coin a phrase, butt.





These beasts would fight against an arch villain of great (though not great enough) power who sends a succession of monsters after the heroes. These monsters range from the conventional big brutes to some of the strangest creatures every committed to film. Amongst the parade of surreal nabobs in the long history of sentai shows are a flower monster, a creature made entirely of mouths, a giant turtle with a lot of traffic lights sticking out of his head, a monster who is a living photocopier and a

wonderfully named Upside-Down Prince, who wields a lip-shaped sword. That's because the action sequences from the astonishingly successful Mighty Morphin' (aka) Power Rangers were culled from the current sentai series. Kyōryū Sentai Zyuranger (Dinosaur Task Force Zyuranger). The ridiculous popularity of the irritable-but-cute teenagers is a vindication of Toei's formula: the mixture of SF, stunts, comedy and bloody big monsters was bound proving to be one of the rare golden eggs of television entertainment. See, if you haven't already, Power Rangers and if you can, Jetman and Free Star Soldier. Otherwise, the latter featuring some of the biggest and toughest mechs ever - the five hundred metre Gaijin King (Giant Dragon God) takes out Tokyo in one stroke, which is more than the big G every morning.

5. Bloody Big Monsters (or: Pardon me, your feet is in my house!)

Bored with run-of-the-mill tiny monsters? Minor destruction not enough for you? Try new Improved GMS: if there's one thing that the Japanese SF fan can be sure of, dealing with mechs regularly it's huge stomping, slightly undersea monsters. By far the best known GMM and indeed the most famous movie monster of all time is Godzilla, a giant fire-breathing dinosaur spawned in the radioactive flames of atomic tests who has trashed Tokyo twenty-odd times and saved it almost as often. He isn't, but always, beside quantum leaps in FX technology (seen played by a guy in a rubber suit, which has been the standard for Japanese monster movies since 1954). Godzilla's closest rival in Japanese Cinema, but interestingly virtually unknown outside the Land of the Rising Sunset is the gigantic, bulked super turtle called Gamera, Guardian of the universe (no less). The other big G is recently stormed the box office with a brand new big budget feature. In much the same way that Godzilla did ten years ago.

Another genre, in which the giant rubber suit stands tall (literally) is the sentai TV series, the already mentioned weird monsters always finding some way to grow giant size before the team invariably whip their behinds. In Zyuranger for example, each monster has a one use Gōmei Kodan-kabakudan (legendary chemical bomb) that enables it to expand to towering proportions, usually to face its heroic mechs on (almost) equal terms.

See, any of twenty Godzilla films, nine Gamera films or an sentai show. Apart from Power Rangers, a few other Japanese

hero/monster shows are available in English (albeit heavily modified and poorly dubbed). These include Spectraman, Ultraman and so on. If numbers are to be believed, the classic Kamen Rider is a Sexual Anomaly (or: Is that a woman in your pocket? Oh it is!)

Shōjo (girl) Manga is replete with androgynous characters. Are they male or are they female? If they keep their mouth shut, it's often near enough impossible to tell. The most attractive male characters in manga and anime are often tall, like men with long flowing hair, high cheek bones and impossibly long slender legs. Supermodel material if ever there was. Grrr too often get the neutering treatment: a good case in point being Susō Camp's Tokyo Babylon, where the brother and sister hero and heroine are mirror or less identical, causing great confusion with the duos' version emerged. Another classic haven of gender weirdness is Kanna 1/3. It's brilliant in every department and I feel no shame in plugging it.

7. Anthropomorphism (or: Make no mistake!)

Literally human shaped, the term has entered fan language to describe humanoid animal or animal-like humans. Many western cartoons feature anthropomorphic characters, like Bugs Bunny, Winnie-the-Pooh, Daffy Duck etc. and anime is rich with as many, often more subtle characters. The Puma twins from Comanche, whose only nod to their feline origins are their pussy ears, the multi-purpose android MukuNeko who looks like a normal of supernaturally cute girl but has the brain of a cat, are a couple of examples of the very popular concept of cat people, as are furry-called slave-girl Pink from Dragon Pink. Go do at Warrior War Canada and the world famous Samurai Pizza Cats.

Cats aren't the only creatures to get crossed with humans in Japan. Mink high-pitched harpists of Dragon Hair is a genetically unlikely cross between dragon and human while Ataru from Urusei Yatsura suffered the unfortunate fate of being turned into a clothed talking hippopotamus for a time.

10th Century Beast Warriors is about as anthropomorphic as you can get. It features a team of heroes who are all part beast: able to transform back and forth willy-nilly into a tiger, mermaid, bird and turtle respectively.

See: 10th Century Beast Warriors, Dragon Pink, Dragon Half, Dominion, All Purpose Catgirl NekoKitty, Samurai Pizza Cats and many more.

8. Yakuza (or: A Finger in every pie and on there's one on the floor!)

The Japanese Mafia, supreme and undisputed rulers of organised crime in Japan. It has been said that it's safe to walk the streets at night because the criminals are either out working for the Yakuza or too scared of them to show their faces. Like the Yanks here, many believe that the police (and the public) tolerate the Yakuza because they keep the other villains in line.

The Yakuza command a starting amount of respect in the Japanese community, not least because of their well publicised practice of cutting off the little fingers of members who go astray and doing worse to anyone who disrespects them. Their presence in anime and live action is often subtle and respectful, with lines like 'I could live like a Yakuza, meaning nothing more than being extremely comfortable.'

And that, dearie beloved, is all I have to say.



PROJECT A-KO

THE POCKET GUIDE

by Robert Lyn Davies

It's mayhem time again. Project A-Ko is once again on the prowl, looking for poor unsuspecting fans to hook on to its ever popular brand of anime parody, mecha action, school girl rivalry and the massive destruction of populated urban areas. Let's for the moment leave behind us the statistics of when A-Ko was produced and by whom. Instead let's get into the spirit of the thing. All together now - 'Akagiyama Middles I' C'mon; yell it out.

Why shout 'Akagiyama Middles'? Because at the core of the A-Ko series is youthful enthusiasm. It's a high school story where the characters sole motivations are being friends, getting to class on time, tracking down suitable boy friends and throwing the latest army tanks over tall buildings. This is not sensible anime. It's wacky and inspired. Choosing not to ignore conventions, but to celebrate in them whilst wickedly make fun of the sacred cows of so much anime. Something which makes sense considering that the first Project A-Ko movie was made in 1986 - slap bang in the middle of the anime explosion which would eventually escape from Japan to conquer the Western world. But that's another story. Let's grab some background info.

Starting with where all the action takes place

Graviton City

Levelled 18 years before the story starts by an impacting alien. (Birth of unknown origin). Graviton has risen from its ruins to become a beautiful high tech metropolis. Most of the city still resides in the impact crater left by the starting. The bridge of which dominated downtown Graviton City.

And introducing -

Project A-Ko. Would be absolutely nothing without it's characters, so let's go and meet them.

The Main Players

A-Ko - The worlds most powerful schoolgirl. Look anyone who can catch a falling steel girder, casually chuck 50 foot tall mechs over his shoulder or accidentally smash through large chunks of alien technology is powerful. **A-Ko** - Cool calm serene

manipulative. The bad little rich girl with an army of spies and an unparalleled ability to design hope robots overnight. **A-Ko** only wants C-Ko, and what A-Ko wants she gets - whatever the cost.

C-Ko - Cute and blissfully unaware of almost everything around her. A-Ko's best friend, the worlds most dangerous co-conspirator. **Seiga** - One of A-Ko's long time friends. When selected to go off to the moon - unceremoniously





characters in anime - even why on earth are they called A-Ko, B-Ko and C-Ko? Because Ko is Japanese for child and the writers couldn't decide what to name them so they left their original temporary name tags in place (which incidentally allegedly stand for Athletic, Brainsy and Cute). Through the Project A-Ko name was there from the start since it's allegedly in homage to the Jackie Chan classic Project A. Which features Jackie at the centre of much mayhem whilst wearing a sailor suit.

The Supporting Cast

The Cross Dressing Aliens

Say B - Hugely muscled and simple of mind (probably caused by being run over by A-Ko so many times) D only wants to get her Princess back to her homeland.

Captain Napolopolito - The drunken captain of the space cruiser which has spent the past 10 years looking for C-Ko. In later episodes she converts the ship into a leisure complex with the delicious intent of stripping the people of Graviton City of enough money to pay for its repairs.

The Long suffering School Teacher Miss Ayumi - The girl's English tutor, with a penchant for strange poetry she never seems to ever complete a lesson without either her pupils being late or running out on her.

The Industrial Magistrate

B-Ko's Father

Like his daughter he's permanently over dressed. He seems to have a affinity for this Presley impersonations and would have made a great lounge singer in another life. In this life he only wants to stay rich, make the military buy his wares and grab lots of Alien Super-technology.

Not content with one hugely successful theatre release, there followed three made-for-video direct sequels which chart the unchanging relationship between the trio whilst adding in new elements. (Such as B-Ko's fathers attempt to seize the alien space cruiser which A-Ko and B-Ko

'crushed' into Graviton City and the end of the first film, a love interest and another source of rivalry between the trio (all in Part 3 & 4). Of course each episode also contains plenty of giant robots and guest appearance by other anime characters for the sharp eyed fan. The completion of the first three sequels really took the Graviton City setting about as far as it could go. So for the next two videos new life was injected into the series by transplanting it to an alien desert world. Here B-Ko and A-Ko are friends - until C-Ko falls from the sky and into their camp. Once again madness and mayhem start up in what are the definite highlights of the video series. Returning once again to the non stop comic action which so beautifully dominated the first film.

Project A-Ko: the mini reviews

Original year of release - in Japan

Project A-Ko (1988)

One of Manga Entertainment's first UK dubs and still one of its best. The UK voice track matches pretty much perfectly the flow of action which never falters and is always fun. This is still one of the most recommendable releases in the UK and a near perfect example of it's genre. **Highly Recommended**

Project A-Ko 2

Plot of the
Gaijinbaku
Financial Group
(1989)

Set three weeks after events in the first movie, this hilarious OVA follow up is a worthy sequel, managing the difficult

balancing act of progressing the characters from the original story whilst maintaining all the components expected of an A-Ko story. **Recommended**

Note the UK release uses the US Manga Corps dub - so it's all change in the voice department but fear not.

the American cast do a fine job. **Project A-Ko 3 - Cinderella Rapidity (1989)**

This attempts to show our three heroines growing up. A-Ko is looking for a cute boyfriend, C-Ko is getting jealous, B-Ko suspects something more sinister is going on and a charming chap called Kat gets caught in between the three of them. **Recommendable!** Well err... it's okay. It's a brave attempt to mature the format. But then again I personally don't want to see those girls growing up. Technically it's fine, good animation, good dubbing, some neat effects and a host of hilarious mecha and fabulous anime character rip-offs. Expect a slowing down of pace and you should be too disappointed. **Project A-Ko & Final (1989)**

This closing episode to the three Graviton City City OVA's ties up the plot lines running through the movie and A-Ko's 1 & 2, while giving us a nice happy ending. At the same time it never boringly repeats itself, adding a few new twists to the in jokes and 'guest appearances' (this and a vital part of Project A-Ko). A good OVA, I expect the UK release to be well worth the wait.

Project A-Ko the 9th - Battle In Gray





Side
Project A-Ko: the Vs - Battle 2: Blue
Side (both 1990)

It's goodbye Grafton City and hello to a strange new universe. But even in this new alternative dimension some things remain constant. E-Ko is overly cute. B-Ko still loves her gadgets and A-Ko is

destruction: what then? How can you further partake in this wonderful world of schoolgirl hijinks? Well the answer could well be Project A-Ko the Role Playing Game.

Published by Janus Publications in the US and available in this country from specialist comic and role-playing stores the game consists of a simple easy to run rules system and a mass of Project A-Ko background information.

And finally - let the credits roll (for the original movie at least)

Story: Katsuhiko Nishijima
Screenplay: Yuji

SOME OTHER FAMOUS PROJECTS

- PROJECT X - A film about monkeys and Matthew Broderick, but not necessarily in that order
- PROJECT Z - A mechanical bed that cares for old people, then goes wild, destroying everything in sight
- PROJECT BLUE BOOK - US Government investigation into UFO's whose conclusions were naturally ignored
- PROJECT K - A mail order anime stockist that's getting a free ad by appearing in this article
- PROJECT FEROCIOUS - Genetic experiments involving the cross-breeding of alligators and wood pigeons (err, we made that one up actually)

Moriyama, Katsuhiko Nishijima
(Tomoko Kawasaki)
Art Director: Shinji Kimura
Character Designer: Yuji Moriyama
Animation Director: Yuji Moriyama
About Yuji Moriyama

He is an incredibly talented man working not only on Project A-Ko and the first 3 sequels but also on a wealth of other classic anime such as Urusei Yatsura - TV Series Wings of Honneamise: Robot Carnival Urusei Yatsura movies (Only You and Beautiful Dreamer), Tenchi-muyo (parts 1&2) Cat Girl Nuku Nuku (and quite a few others!) Is it any wonder that Project A-Ko turned out so good?



amazingly strong. The plot path there's one but what matters is the non stop slapstick action. Occasionally slightly ouch! but always painfully funny and tongue in cheek. I would suspect that if the voice acting lives up to the quality of parts 2 & 3 then these releases will be very very easy to highly recommend.

UK Release Schedule

Project A-Ko Out since August '92
Project A-Ko 2 available since July '93 - what a long wait!
Project A-Ko 3 September '93
Project A-Ko 4 November '93
Project A-Ko Vs The Grey Side January '94
Project A-Ko Vs The Blue Side March '94

But once you've watched your Project A-Ko videos to



THE ANIME SOLA

THE SUN

THE SUN ANIME PROJECTS (DVD)

With all of it's warmth and positivity, this is truly the Sun of the Anime Solar System. Sharing a common theme in anime it's boy robots, alien princess/princesses, beautiful cosmos etc. In this is a romantic comedy that really lets you feel warm inside. The plot is simple, as Goddess (Julia) doesn't reach's wish to have a girlfriend for life, and the animation, in particular the character design, is a delight to watch. Don't let the U certificate for the price put you off. It's really worthwhile.

AVAILABLE FROM
ANIME PROJECTS (DVD)

VENUS

VENUS ANIME PROJECTS (DVD)

Set instantly on Venus, this is the big screen version of Yoshioka Toshihiko's epic manga story. Rejecting the expectation to be typical, Venus ANIME takes more of a political bent with the lead character, who is being caught up with and forced into the military during a civil war between two opposing factions. The atmosphere of the movie is excellent, with a use of orange used in abundance, and the soundtrack by Aki Mizuki (Lupin Third etc.) has some fantastic moments. The only gripe is poor voice acting, but this aside, it's a superb action movie.

AVAILABLE FROM
MANGA VIDEO (DVD)

ALTERNATIVE EARTH

ALTERNATIVE EARTH ANIME PROJECTS (DVD)

Another GAINAX movie, this is set on an alternative world that is on the brink of space flight. It is definitely NOT an action movie, but a well crafted and thought provoking tale of the struggle to get a man into space against all the odds. Into Unsettled, the man in question starts off as a boy, no hope, but his chance meeting with an overly religious young woman starts him on to his true destiny. The character design is appealing, and the animation itself is very good, with an amazing attention to detail that helps to create a complete, but different, universe.

AVAILABLE FROM
MANGA VIDEO (DVD)



MARS

MARS ANIME PROJECTS (DVD)

Sharing the same properties as its host planet (i.e. small but hot), this is an ideal introduction to the way of life of an anime fanatic, crammed full of so many in-jokes that even the most hardened fan may have trouble spotting them. The story shows the rise and fall (and rise again) of a company started by a group of eccentric otaku and is broken up by some live action documentary-style interludes that are almost so believable it's creepy. Character designs by Kenichi Sugano are just the tip of the iceberg in this glossy GAINAX production.

AVAILABLE FROM
ANIME PROJECTS (DVD)



EARTH

EARTH ANIME PROJECTS (DVD)

This is a true breath of fresh air for the UK anime scene. A down to earth soap opera style story with a charm to it that will keep you glued. It follows the life of a teenage girl, Minako, who by the use of a wig and a pair of glasses dyes two boys at school, with neither realising her alternate identity. The story doesn't linger on this, though, and develops into a fight between the boys for Minako and the lecherous sports coach's apparent affection for her. There are no unrealistic moments in this anime and this makes it believable and compelling to watch.

AVAILABLE FROM
WESTERN CONNECTION (DVD)



R SYSTEM

The Universe is a vast and distant place. So in the desperate hope to get rid of them, we packed **SUMTEAM** into the nearest interstellar rocket and shot them going south for the fastest US anime releases (in no particular order), and all they came back with was a packet of space dust and some dubious planetary theft.

THE ASTEROID BELT

In the same way that the Asteroid Belt was the end of something once great, **ASURA** was without doubt the beginning to the mighty anime boom in the '80s. Centering on a gang of young bikers and their entanglement with a secret government project, this is one of the best anime films ever made, with an atmosphere and epic scope that rivals most live-action movies. Directed by it's creator, Katsuhiro Otomo, **ASURA** flows smoothly along and keeps the viewer enthralled, ending in a superb climax.

AVAILABLE FROM
MANGA VIDEO (USUB)



SATURN

Anyone who has heard of **MACROSS** (i.e. everyone) and wonders what all the fuss is about has the chance to experience the condensed version of the original series' story. This is about 30 (if anime) plus containing robots, dog fights in space, space battles (including alien forces), journeys through the rings of Saturn (USA) - but it's moulded together with a magic that gives the **MACROSS** universe a real sense of being. The animation is top quality and the central idea that music can be used to win a war comes across powerfully in the spectacular battle scene.

AVAILABLE FROM
KISEKI FILMS (ISUB)



MARS

Turned with the Red Planet, the setting for this anime is very similar (but is, incidentally, with the remnants of civilization left to crumble, damn! Space, anyone?). In this past, nuclear war, only the tough survive - the perfect excuse for an all-out martial arts gone mad. Although the storyline of the original manga seems to have taken a vacation (along with any explanation of WHY people explode when Kenshiro touches them), it's still an impressive and mindless action romp that fans of ultra-violence will love. Don't throw it to your grating, though.

AVAILABLE FROM
MANGA VIDEO (ISUB)



JUPITER

Associated with Jupiter (because of the all encompassing Black Hole bomb see episode 5), the **POY TOY TOY** **CONQUEST** manages to be a superbly low-budget sci-fi series. Following the military training of Kenta Takara, an overly sensitive girl whose father was killed by an alien ship in space, the storyline manages to evolve a surprising amount of sympathy for her - as events unfold, it becomes more and more compelling, aided by some superb direction by Makoto Arai, and considerable acting - a far more realistic looking (if over-the-top) than the Super Robot anime, and some of the most famous character designs by Makoto Arai (Makoto Arai).

AVAILABLE FROM
KISEKI FILMS (ISUB)



URANUS

Naturally associated with Uranus (they both are sent with 121, 1986 & 1988), it is a rare beauty in the fact that it is basically a demon anime, but strangely, it's one of the obligatory imagery releases that frequented all too many of those shores. Instead, it takes on it's action theme and well-timed pairing of a boy (Kenta), and his martial art (demon (demon)), who promises that one day he will have Uranus for lunch. The anime is interesting and best of all, the CD (CD theatre tape 1) is (Makoto).

AVAILABLE FROM
WESTERN CONNECTION (ISUB)

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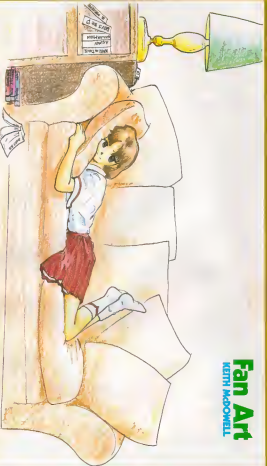
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Fan Art

KEITH McDOWELL



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